

## REMARKS

### Status of the Claims

In the Office Action mailed April 4, 2007, Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicant regards as the invention; and Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,556,466, issued to Martin et al. ("*Martin*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,464,066, issued to Bethke et al. ("*Bethke*").

By this reply, Applicant has amended Claims 1-5 and added new Claim 6. No claims have been canceled and no new matter has been introduced. As such, Claims 1-6 are pending in this application.

### Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶2

By this reply, the Applicant has amended Claim 1 to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicant regards as the invention. As such, amended Claim 1, as well as all claims ultimately depending thereon, is respectfully submitted as being in condition for allowance and Applicant requests that the claim rejections be withdrawn and the pending claims be allowed to issue.

### Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

#### *Martin in view of Bethke*

*Martin* discloses an installation for coating vehicle bodies comprising a coating booth 22, a drying booth 32, a plurality of skids 24, and a ski-conveying system 26. *Martin* however fails to disclose adjacent skids that are movable into one another such that they partially overlap in the movement direction as required in amended Claim 1—and as originally filed. See Office Action mailed April 4, 2007, p. 3. Consequently, *Martin* further fails to disclose that the adjacent skids are movable into one another with the first skid runners and the second skid runners such that they partially overlap in the movement direction—as required in amended Claim 1.

*Bethke* discloses a conveyor 10 wherein pallet assemblies 16 are conveyed by means of a revolving roller chain 14. The pallet assemblies 16 move across a guide rail 12A by

rollers 18. The conveying system of *Bethke* is a continuous loop conveying system. To that end, a further guide rail 12B is arranged below the guide rail 12A. The pallet assemblies 16 are moved across the guide rail 12B upside down after being conveyed across the guide rail 12A on the top of the conveyor 10.

In a situation where the conveyor 10 is to transport large objects that laterally overhang a single base plate of a single pallet assembly 16, two or more pallet assemblies 16 are coupled with each other. For that purpose, a latching device is provided comprising a pivot arm 23 arranged on a first pallet assembly 16 and an engagement plate 24 arranged on an adjacent second pallet assembly 16. Different embodiments of the latching device are shown in figures 3-7 of *Bethke*.

In the second and third embodiment according to figures 6 and 7, respectively, the pivot arm 23 and the engagement plate 24 are designated with 23', 24' and 23'' and 24''.

The conveyor 10 as disclosed in *Bethke* does not comprise a coating booth or a drying booth and further does not comprise skids having a first skid runner and a second skid runner as required in Applicant's amended Claim 1.

In addition, although *Bethke's* two adjacent pallet assemblies 16 are movable towards one another such that they partially overlap in the movement direction, the only components that overlap however are the pivot arm 23 of the first pallet assembly 16 and the engagement plate 24 of the second pallet assembly 16. In the case where a plurality of pallet assemblies 16 are coupled with each other, the base plates thereof are arranged adjacent to each other without any overlap of two adjacent base plates. This is particularly shown in figure 3 of *Bethke*. Thus, the overall dimension of the supporting structure of the pallet assemblies 16 is not decreased in the case of a plurality of coupled pallet assemblies 16. Furthermore, when compared with the sum of the single dimensions of each single pallet assembly 16 of the plurality of coupled pallet assemblies 16, the overall dimension of the supporting structure of the pallet assemblies 16 may quite possibly increase in the plurality of coupled pallet assemblies 16 because of small spaces between the base plates of the pallet assemblies 16.

Contrastingly, in the Applicant's installation according to amended Claim 1, the skids are capable of moving into one another with their first skid runners and their second

skid runners, which leads to the result that—compared with the sum of the overall dimensions of each single skid—the overall dimension of a formation of a plurality of skids is significantly decreased. In addition, no complex latching device is necessary; and therefore, no additional measures have to be taken to ensure the decoupling of two skids coupled to each other. As such, the objects to be coated are able to be moved closer together within the drying booth and can be easily separated from each other within the coating booth, if necessary.

In sum, the combination of *Martin* and *Bethke* does not lead to all the features of Applicant's Claim 1, as amended. Furthermore, although *Bethke* proposes providing a latching device for the mechanical coupling of two adjacent skids, *Bethke* does not suggest the modification of the skids as described in *Martin* such that adjacent skids are movable into one another with their first skid runners and their second skid runners—as required in Applicant's amended Claim 1.

Because the combination of relied upon prior art references fails to teach, disclose, or suggest each and every element of Applicant's amended Claim 1, Applicant respectfully submits that amended Claim 1—as well as all claims ultimately depending thereon—is patentable and requests the rejection be removed and the claim be allowed to issue.

#### New Claim

Claim 6 directly depends on now allowable amended Claim 1, and thus includes each and every element of Claim 1. For at least the same reasons that amended Claim 1 is allowable—as set forth above—Applicant submits that new Claim 6 is also allowable.

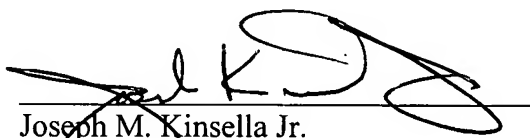
### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above claim amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and requests removal of the claim rejections.

If any additional fees are required with this correspondence, the Commissioner is authorized to debit Applicant's Deposit Account 50-0545.

Respectfully Submitted,

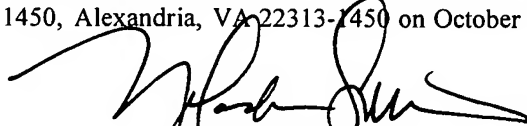
Dated: October 4, 2007



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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on October 4, 2007.



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